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NEGRO LEADERSHIP NEEDS A UNIFIED HIGH COMMAND.

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GUIDELINES ARE PRESENTED FOR A UNIFIED HIGH COMMAND TO HELP NEGRO LEADERS IN LAUNCHING A FULL-SCALE ATTACK AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND RACIAL INJUSTICE. AMONG THE SUGGESTIONS ARE--(1) SMALL PRIVATE AUTONOMIES SHOULD BE LIQUIDATED, (2) THE HIGH COMMAND SHOULD ESTABLISH A FACT-FINDING INTELLIGENCE STAFF, AND (3) RESOURCES SHOULD BE COMBINED AND COORDINATED TO ATTACK PROBLEMS IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE GREATEST GOOD WOULD BE ACHIEVED WITH THE LEAST RACIAL DISLOCATION. SUGGESTIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS, SELF-HELP PROGRAMS, AND FINANCING ARE ALSO MADE. IT IS FELT THAT WELL-ORGANIZED LOCAL LEADERSHIP OFTEN CAN ACHIEVE MORE THAN OUTSIDERS WITH GREATER PRESTIGE. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "QUARTERLY REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG NEGROES," VOLUME 35, NUMBER 3, JULY 1967. (AF)

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Negro Leadership Needs A Unified High Command

By Marcus H. Boulware

Since the recent Mississippi march to Jackson, labelled "Meredith's Folly" by Adolph J. Slaughter of the *Chicago Defender*, Negro leadership has again received the strong finger of criticism. It was "triggered" when a group of youths among SNCC's and CORE's pilgrims generated unrestrained enthusiasm which led them to cry out, "We want *black power!*"

In the Mississippi march, the youths' enthusiasm was not unlike that developed by a crowd accompanying Jesus Christ to Jerusalem during Passion Week. The Hebrew devotees remembered how Jesus had driven the money-changers from the Temple, how He was victorious over his antagonists, and how He made the way to heaven so easy that even a little child could enter. They remembered how His sermons redirected their lives. Even the most callous bearers yielded admiration. "Never a man so spake," they said. As far as the multitude was concerned, its enthusiasm would brook no halfway measures. They would take Jesus by force and make Him king. Likewise, when marching youths in Mississippi recalled the sufferings of their race, the Montgomery boycott, the demonstrations and sit-ins, the passage of civil rights legislation, their enthusiasm carried them away, so much so, that they cried, "Black Power!"

It is very evident that the small band of Jews in the company of Jesus did not have the political power to crown Him king. Nor, by any stretch of the imagination can the Negro minority gain complete control over the 90 per cent majority in this country. Of this, the panic now seizing some whites has no foundation. However, the cry "black power"—whatever it is—did inject a new vigor into the civil rights movement which has become bogged down with the "excess baggage" of obsolete rights demonstrations.

The doctrine of "black power" has caused a new rift among the leaders of the conservative NAACP, the non-violent SCLC, the outspoken CORE and SNCC, as well as non-civil right organizations. Negro leadership has had its share of criticism since mid-century, when all types of guerrilla leaders—national, state and local—sprang up like mushrooms across the land. Paul Robeson in his Prague address said that Negro leadership in America was corrupt, but J. A. Rogers, historian, replied that Negro leaders don't get the chance. Julius J. Adams in his book, *The Challenge*, and George S. Schuyler, journalistic sage for 40 years, have also taken colored leaders to task.

In defense of the leaders at mid-century, the late P. B. Young, Sr., former publisher of the *Journal and Guide* at Norfolk, stated, "There are no techniques that Negro leaders have not employed that they could have used, except perhaps, the technique of revolution, and everyone knows that this action would have been fatal."

In the November 12, 1959 issue of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Lem Graves, Jr., journalist, set the thesis for this article by calling upon Negro leaders to conduct a full-scale offensive against discrimination and prejudice. Under the title of "Negro Leadership Needs a Unified High Command," Graves said:

The enemies of Negro progress and

integration are united. There are, in this country, organized hate lists. This reporter weekly receives poison-pen notes from these hate-mongers. The Army general staff has a unified command in its operation of army posts. The Dixiecrats are organized and hold regular caucuses in the United States Congress. Industrial corporations plan by day and night how to keep Negroes and poor whites at each other's throats.

Against this united front, Negro leaders are still acting like guerrilla chiefs, when the combined resources, planning concepts, and firepower are urgently needed for strategic concentration at vulnerable targets and in such sequence as will achieve the most good with the least racial dislocation.

Thas is why this writer dares to challenge Negro leadership to devise a system of priorities and the machinery for softening the blow of integration upon the Negro community. Small private autonomies must be liquidated for the general good.

Let us now employ Lem Graves' formula to provide the guidelines for a unified high command to direct Negro leadership.

First, Negro leaders are still like guerrilla chiefs. *Therefore, small private autonomies must be liquidated for the general good.* While the large civil rights organizations are fairly sincere in their professed aims, there are too many smaller guerrilla autonomies which exist merely for the personal glorification of specific leaders. In fall, 1965, J. B. Harren, columnist for *The Carolinian* (Raleigh), wrote an article calling attention to certain Tarheel civil rights leaders who were strutting around like peacocks with their guns "half-cocked", and so they missed vulnerable targets because they could not express themselves in literate English and went around hollering like geese who made more noise than anything else. *Chicago Defender's* Adolph J. Slaughter, writing about "Meredith's Folly" in the July 2-8, 1966 issue, emphasized the struggle of leaders for individual power. He said, "We don't want what we have been getting of late, individual rights' showmen who believe movements are created for them and their methods. . ."

When a group of SCLC ministers went to Lincolnton, Georgia to demonstrate last fall, a group of local hard-working Negroes broke up their march to force integration of schools. George S. Schuyler wrote in the *Pittsburgh Courier* that "some sleek, out-of-town, well-dressed preachers had been carrying on their pestiferous nonsense much too long and without anything beneficial to the Negro except for the outside agitators who have a vested interest in this racket." In this connection, the writer questions the feasibility of the activities of Martin Luther King, Jr., who once went to Chicago, since this large city already has capable Negro leadership to seek redress in connection with Chicago's racial problems. Martin Luther King, Jr., was allegedly not permitted to speak in Jackson, Mississippi, at the termination of the march, probably because of his non-violent doctrine. Space does not permit further citations, but judging from news and television media Negro leaders who do not go along with the "black power" cry may be ploughed under.

Second, a unified high command of Negro leadership can establish an intelligence staff to gather facts before striking at any probable target. Too many civic rights leaders, acting like guerrilla chiefs, have called demonstrations without sufficient advanced information. Jesus urged men to use foresight, think straight and count the cost. He told two parables: one dealt with the planning that goes into building a tower, and the other told of a king who sized up *his strength* with that

of the enemy's before going to war. The point of these two parables is that we must not count on an introductory enthusiasm to finish the job. And, in our civil rights demonstrations, there is a lot of enthusiasm, but this alone is not enough.

When the Israelites were about to enter the Land of Promise, spies were sent out to get the lay of the land. Many great generals have sent out an advanced task force for the purpose of sizing up the enemy. These task forces consisted of highly-trained soldiers, taught to operate behind the enemy's lines, living in the country, speaking the language of the people, counting on dissatisfied citizens of the enemy country to give them support; and, then, sneaking back, if they could, to their army's main headquarters with the information needed to win.

Some civil rights leaders need to imitate the procedures of our great military genuises who had foresight and counted the cost before engagement in battle. Even then, many military generals failed to use effectively the advanced information they had. As a result, they were defeated. A few civil rights leaders have won some victories, but they have not kept a statistical record of their activities. They cannot account accurately for their victories and defeats. To be sure, they lack the catalogued facts to make such an analysis possible.

Third, Graves said that Negro leaders need to combine resources, plan concepts and firepower to concentrate their thrust at vulnerable targets in such a sequence as will achieve the most good with minimum racial dislocation. A high command could combine, for instance, a civil rights strategy consisting of persuasion (winning the understanding heart), non-violent disciplining of resentment, subtle coercion, racial and individual economic independence, and legal compulsion. One highly trained leader would be in charge of each aspect of the total campaign strategy. The high command would decide when and where to wage specific battles for the advancement of Negroes. In one section of the nation, persuasion would be more effective than demonstration; while, in another region, legal compulsion may be the answer. But it could seek to develop economic independence on all fronts.

Often, in the past, some leaders have staged voter drives in communities where they were not needed. Perhaps a quiet program of community citizenship education would have been more fruitful. Some leaders have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to get civil righters out of jail when the money might have been better spent in economic self-help projects in Negro communities. Have the civil rights leaders considered Charles E. Silberman, author of *Crisis in Black and White,* and the things he observed: "The politics of life do not permit equality of freedom when one person is constantly in the position of magnanimous donor and the other in the position of perennial recipient." What goals, and when to seek them, could be solved effectively by a unified high command? In many cases, the staging of demonstrations gained nothing but animosity on both sides. A unified high command would no doubt have postponed striking at this particular target until a later and more opportune time. Many times well-organized local leadership can achieve more than outside prestige leaders. The writer has often wondered why Dr. King has spread himself too thin by trying to be everywhere at the same time. He should ignore some trouble situations, and this is what a high command would insist upon for the general good.

If our Negro leadership had an intelligence staff, it could reconsider many of its techniques. George S. Schuyler, on one occasion, called attention to our leaders' failure to employ good public relations during the Negro revolution. Every public relations firm knows full well that in order to win customers or "sell" an idea, you strive to intrigue people, not repel them. You offer something, but you don't threaten them with "boycotts and demonstrations." You don't win people to your side by antagonizing them. For instance, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has seared the public conscience, of course, but he has yet to test the power of persuasion.

A unified command would include a public relations staff to keep the public image of the Negro constructive. To create any sort of reception for a new idea (first-class citizenship) today involves a vast machinery of propaganda and expense. Jesus took a handful of uneducated men, trained them in the secrets of influencing people by persuasion, and commissioned them to preach the gospel. In this great act of courage, Jesus was the surpasser of all the prophets who had gone before him. This makes us ask, how did he deal with objections? By what sort of strategy did he interest and persuade? The gospel reached the world not because there was a demand for another religion but because Jesus knew how, and taught his followers how, to catch the attention of the indifferent, and translate a great spiritual conception into terms of practical self-concern. To win our southern opponents, Negro leaders must be willing to put themselves into the southern white man's place. Jesus called it the necessity for "putting yourself in step with your prospect."

Fourth, a unified high command would help Negroes achieve the most good with the least racial dislocation. Often in the past, a guerrilla civil rights chief has threatened a city with subsequent demonstration if he didn't get what the Negroes wanted, or we will worry you to death with our boycott banners. Instead of boycott, did the leader consider the art of coaxing an enemy? Did he ask himself, "How many local colored citizens will lose their jobs?" If so, what can my leadership offer to counteract their losses? If the leader succeeds in winning by demonstration, he might win a moral victory but the people will reap an unemployment fiasco. Will the outside leader remain in the community to salvage the economic harm inflicted upon the local Negroes?

Fifth, a unified high command could devise means by which Negroes can lift themselves up economically, educationally, and politically in constructive ways. This phase of the battle against discrimination is significantly important. Leaders must somehow teach Negroes to help themselves away from the curse of chronic dependence on other folk and welfare subsistence. The Interfaith Health Association, a Negro self-help group formed three years ago in the Borough of Queens, New York, leased buildings and purchased others that had been closed by authorities because of code violations. The project has been successful in eradicating slums and slum psychology that even public officials are extending the hand of maximum cooperation. Our civil rights leaders and their fellow militants ought to take a few lessons in how to help the masses constructively. The *Sentinel Bulletin* of Tampa, Florida, urged in an editorial, September 23, 1965, that "Negroes should seek to help themselves by teaching their race how to pass civil service tests, keeping their neighborhood and homes clean, dressing properly for all occasions,

acting politely in public places, avoiding profanity, and giving their children every opportunity to be good men and women in a changing world." Schuyler, in an article in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 28, 1965, stated that he knew of no colored community advertising itself constructively to the public by showing its palaces, accommodations, and conveniences available instead of slums and attendant problems. Since the New Revolutionary approaches have failed, Schuyler urged a trial of the method of winning people through good public relations. It seems that many leaders have underestimated the power of good public relations and persuasion, and a unified high command can provide it better than any individual leader.

Sixth, a unified high command can inaugurate an efficient finance and accounting staff to keep up with civil rights spending, to raise funds for the command's treasury, and to keep the civil rights army out of the red. Nobody has much respect for an organization that remains in debt because it tries to undertake too many goals on limited financial resources. The central command can prevent this by "living within its budget," and the financial chief would be in position to exert a firm hand in this matter.

In conclusion, Negro leadership was challenged at mid-century to make plans to prepare Negroes for integration by softening its blows. Our leadership missed the boat on this battle front. Our only salvation for progress in the nuclear and space age is a unified high command to direct Negro leadership, Now, what next?

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